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THE SETTLEMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE FAR EAST

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In the popular phrase of the day, the United States are a world power which all must respect. I do not like the phrase, for it presupposes something like a recent epoch in our history. We are a world power; but be it remembered we came into existence, somewhat unconsciously to be sure, between the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the Treaty of Partition and Peace in 1783. Followed as that treaty was by the French Revolution and a change of government forms and administration throughout Europe, our own independence marks an epoch in the world's evolution and history of which all mankind has taken note.

But interesting as the topic is, I can consider it in only one aspect. I refer of course to that one which affects our relations with all other nations, and which has especially characterized and governed our relations with the countries of the Far East. "Friendly relations with all, but entangling alliances with none," has been the high principle which has so far given us the good will and the friendly consideration of all Asiatic people. So long as we stand on that principle nothing but satisfaction can come to us.

From the earliest day of our independent life and of our relations with the Far East, we have stood upon that principle with both China and Japan. We have declared repeatedly that we have no desire for territorial possessions within the limits of either country. And they have believed and trusted us. We have declared that we have no other interests to serve but commercial interests; that we wished only to sell our products and buy theirs, on fair and equitable terms. Through our minister the Honorable Caleb Cushing, we negotiated the first commercial treaty with China, and this treaty became the model and basis of all subsequent treaties between China and the treaty powers. It wisely

contained the favored nations clause, and under the provisions of that clause, we have since secured without pressure or illwill all the advantages granted to other nations, whether voluntarily or at the cannon's mouth. We have taken no part in the opium wars, no part in the English and French invasion, and no part in the suppression of Chinese outbreaks, till the Boxer War, which threatened the destruction of our legation, our merchants and missionaries, forced us to join the allied powers and send a China relief expedition.

We have taken a similar part in relation to Japan. A little over a half century ago it was our Commodore Perry who induced the Japanese—the most exclusive people in the world—to enter into treaty relations with us. And it should be remembered that that treaty was the model of all that followed it, and that it too contained the favored nations clause.

In both the Japanese and Chinese treaties we reserved the right of extra-territorial jurisdiction, under which justice was administered and protection was secured to our own people in those countries, free from supervision or interference by native officials. We maintain that right as yet against the Chinese, but were the first to waive it in the case of Japan. Under the treaties duties on all imported articles were fixed at 5 per cent. *ad valorem*. We still hold the right to regulate as against China, but have, with the concurrence of the treaty powers, fixed the duty at 5 per cent. in gold, instead of in silver, in China, while we have allowed the Japanese to fix it at 13 per cent. and recently to increase it indefinitely.

This brings us to the "Open Door," which has played such an important part in the diplomatic relations of all the treaty powers, with China in the last five years. It is an elusive if not a misleading phrase, commonly understood to mean "free trade," but which really means nothing more valuable than the equal right of all nations to trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire, under the same and equal conditions. In its tentative or primitive form, it was contained in the favored nations clause of the Cushing treaty, which, as before stated, has always formed the basis of our claims against China, but when it was put forward in its new form, it was nothing more nor less than a request on the part of our government to the governments of the other treaty powers, that in the changes which it was thought possible might grow out of the Boxer Rebellion, they would respect our rights under the existing treaties. Well,

to say the least of it, this was a new departure in our diplomacy. While it put us in the attitude of asking unusual guarantees, it conveyed an intimation that we suspected one or more of the powers of intending to do us a wrong.

It is worthy of remark that while it brought satisfactory assurances from all, it brought them just as promptly from Russia, as from Great Britain or Japan. Nobody held back, and if anything is settled in diplomacy that is now a settled principle in the policy of all nations towards China.

But there is another principle which was accepted on our suggestion after the close of the Boxer Rebellion, during the season which was devoted to settling the indemnity, and securing proper guaranties against future outbreaks, and that was that all the treaty powers would henceforth respect the territorial and administrative entity of the Chinese Empire. Curiously enough there was no hesitation on the part of anyone in agreeing to this fundamental principle. Each nation as soon as it was asked, acknowledged its fairness, and promptly gave out its adhesion to the principle.

In this Russia was just as prompt and frank as was either Japan or Great Britain. The fact is there was, so far as the correspondence reveals, no hesitation on the part of any nation. Indeed they were acting in harmony and concert, through their representatives in Peking, as well as through their foreign offices at their respective capitals. So this may also be considered a settled and binding principle for all nations.

Now those who have followed my statement will naturally inquire what is the war between Japan and Russia about?

The answer to this takes us into the consideration of another set of facts which reach farther back than the treaties. Before summarizing them let me briefly call your attention to China and its treatment by the treaty powers.

It contains 1,800,000 square miles within the wall, and about 4,000,000 outside. Its population is estimated at from 275,000,000 by Rockhill to 425,000,000 by Sir Robert Hart. It is probably somewhere between the two. It is isolated from the rest of the world by deserts, mountains and wilderness on one side and the sea on the other. Its civilization is the oldest in existence, and until interfered with by the European powers its dominion extended over all Northern and Eastern Asia except India.

But since the Portuguese first reached its shores it has been despoiled by every maritime nation that made any pretension to colonies beyond sea.

Portugal took Macao, and holds it now.

Great Britain took Hong Kong and Burmah, a buffer state.

France took Cochin China, Tonkin, Annam and part of Siam.

Russia took all Siberia.

And recently Japan took Korea and Southern Manchuria.

In short, till the present crisis arose, China was, to use a figure of Li Hung-Chang's, "like an animal surrounded by ravening wolves." But this is not all, France and Great Britain and still later Japan have laid her under heavy contributions of money and spoils.

So long as the pack was made up of white wolves only, the world stood by without raising a voice in protest. But when our "Little Brown Brothers," the Japanese, appeared upon the scene and drove China out of Korea, wrested from her the Liaotung Peninsula, Port Arthur, Talien-wan, Formosa and the Pescadores, and took from her an indemnity of 200,000,000 Haikwan taels of silver as the price of peace, the world—or the European world at least—raised its voice in alarm if not in sympathy. The balance of power in the Far East had been disturbed. Japan had broken its insular bonds, and acquired a footing on the Asiatic mainland. The fisherman had unbottled the Afrite, which now floated menacingly above the Eastern horizon, and filled the hearts of the European white man with fear. The new situation threatened all foreign interests, those of commerce as well as those of politics. What was to be done?

There was a pause for consideration. Russia which had had a friendly legation in Peking for two hundred years, or for more than a century before any other power ever thought about it, doubtless saw the danger first, and made haste to take counsel with Germany and France if not with Great Britain. What the secret archives of diplomacy contain no one can tell, but if they do not show that Great Britain was consulted, and that she did not stand in with the others, it will be the second time that her fears got the better of her cupidity. I say the second time because it is an open secret that when Great Britain and France were allies and took Peking in 1861, Louis Napoleon proposed the partition of China, but Great Britain declined, probably for the reason that she did not

like her company and regarded France as an interloper in Eastern Asia.

Upon the occasion under consideration, she was less disinterested, for while Russia, Germany and France united in demanding the withdrawal of Japan and the surrender of her conquests on the mainland, on the payment of an additional indemnity of 30,000,000 Haikwan taels, Great Britain joined France and Germany in making a continental credit for China on which she borrowed the money.

But this is not all. When Russia took over Port Arthur and Talién-wan, as she did under a twenty-five years' lease, with the privilege of two renewals, the former for a closed port to be used jointly by Russia and China for naval purposes, and the latter a free port open to all the world, Great Britain immediately asked for and obtained a lease of Wei-hai-wei across the strait for a period "so long as Russia should occupy Port Arthur." In addition she took over Kowloon on the mainland opposite the island of Hong Kong.

Germany, it will be remembered, took a similar lease on Kiaochow and the country for fifty kilometers around it. This lease too runs ninety-nine years. It authorizes the building of certain railroads.

France, not to be left, took over the mainland between two bays north of Tonquin for the same period.

These possessions were all taken by treaty and lease made, you may rest assured, not willingly nor voluntarily by China, but under pressure. Russia's, which included a concession and right of way for a branch to her Chinese Eastern railroad through Northern Manchuria, gave her the right to build, operate and police the cut-off line and branch, and a right on the part of China to take over the road at any time within a period of thirty-five years, with an absolute reversion to China at the end of eighty years.

These treaties were all of one pattern. That of Russia was neither better nor worse than the others, but it had a better excuse than either of them. Inasmuch as Russia had held unbroken and undisputed sway over Siberia and her eastern dependencies from the beginning of the seventeenth century, and had recently built a railroad to connect them with the rest of the empire, and thus create better facilities for populating them, and giving them an outlet to ice-free ports on the Pacific, she had better justification for getting it by lease than for taking it by force of arms. Indeed

most people who stop to think about it must conclude that her show of justification was greater than that of either of the other powers. Neither of them had any interior possessions, surrounded by neighbors, through whose lands they required an outlet to the world's highway, the sea, but each had coveted and taken a part of China's territory apparently for no better reason than that it could.

However the European powers might have felt about it or justified themselves, it is evident that Japan was seriously dissatisfied with the combination against her. It is also evident now to all the world, that smarting under the injustice done her by the allies in depriving her of what she had regarded as her just conquests, she had retired to her islands, with the firm resolve to prepare for war and get back her own whenever she could.

In order that her feelings and position may be better understood certain figures are worthy of consideration.

The area of the Japanese Empire is about 142,000 square miles; her population something less than 47,000,000 souls; the family group is estimated at from five to seven souls; the entire cultivable area is about 18,000 square miles, or less than one-third of that contained in the State of Illinois, while the average family holding is a little over two acres. The overflow population is estimated at about 500,000 per year, while the per capita distribution of wealth is less than that of Russia.

A moment's consideration of these facts will show beyond a doubt that Japan drove China from Korea because she wanted that country for her own exploitation, and so far as possible for the occupation of her overflow population. Of course she will give Korea better government and a better development of her natural resources, for that is to her own interest, but there is no pretence that she intends to leave Korea to her own control, or to prefer her interests to those of Japan. In fact she went there first in pursuit of what she conceived to be her own permanent and paramount interests, and not for any altruistic or disinterested purpose whatever.

The Boxer outbreak and its consequences gave Japan an excuse for going back to China, and in going back she had just the same duty to perform that the other powers had, no more and no less. I have always held that the Treaty Powers in failing to accept her offer to go alone immediately after the outbreak, took a great and

unnecessary risk, which might have proved fatal to the legations. I have always felt that in holding her back till all could gather their troops from the four quarters of the earth, and till they were all ready to advance, they showed an unworthy jealousy of their ally and unnecessarily prolonged the peril of the legations and missionaries.

In the advance on Peking the Japanese troops easily showed themselves to be equal to the best. Seeing the perfection of their organization and discipline, and knowing something of their home resources and defenses, I said at the time that there was no power in the world that could land an army in Japan and get it out without disaster or disgrace. I also declared it to be my opinion that Japan could probably drive Russia back to the Amur River, but I doubted if she could keep her there. I believe I was the first if not the only writer of the day to predict at the outbreak of the Japan-Chinese war that Japan would prove to be easily victorious. And so it has been.

I wish to say, too, that in the negotiations of the allies with China, after the end of the Boxer outbreak, when all the powers, appalled by the consequences which would doubtless follow the partition of China or even its division into "spheres of influence and interest," when all were acting in concert with each other, I have no doubt, if the concert had been continued, and patience and moderation had continued to be the rule, all the difficulties, and they were many, might have been overcome and peace ensured on the broad principle announced by our own government, that the territorial and administrative entity of China should be respected, and that all nations should have an equal opportunity for trade in every part of the empire.

If this conclusion is correct, it becomes a matter of importance to the world to know what led to—and who was responsible for—the disturbance of the concert of the powers. This has been generally attributed to the attitude of Russia in reference to the withdrawal of the troops, with which she had suppressed the Boxer outbreak in Manchuria, rebuilt her railroad, and re-established order at the stations along the right-of-way. All this, be it remembered, was done in pursuance of her natural and treaty rights, just as any other power similarly situated might have done it—just as Great Britain did it on the Tientsin-Peking line in which she had no property right, but which was built by British engineers. The only difference in the two cases is that the Peking line was only eighty

miles long and situated in the densely populated province of Pechili, while the Russian lines were 1,500 miles long and situated in the frontier provinces of Manchuria.

But withal, when requested, Russia gave her promise to withdraw in six, nine and eighteen months—which she soon reduced to one year—provided that “no disturbance should arise and that the action of the powers should not prevent it.”

She claims that she was actually engaged in carrying this stipulation out in good faith, when the correspondence with Japan, and the demands of that power caused her to delay. What the exact facts about this are I do not pretend to know, nor do I think that any outsider certainly does. It is alleged that certain contracts or concessions were secured from Korea, which at that time, be it remembered, was an independent, autonymous power, by the Russians for timber cutting on the Yalu, and that this aroused the apprehensions and ire of the Japanese. It is said that the Tsar and the Grand Dukes were interested in these concessions, and that they were warned by disinterested officials that this would lead to war. Both sides have given their accounts of the negotiations which preceded the outbreak of hostilities. Both claim to have been right, and it is clear that both thought they had rights and interests in Southern Manchuria, which they regarded as of vital importance. Back of it all, it cannot be denied, that both wanted Manchuria—the Russians because it was traversed by their railroads, and abounded in vast stretches of wild and uncultivated lands. Japan wanted it neutralized as a protection to Korea, in which she claimed paramount interests.

Moreover, it is certain that Japan sought a *modus vivendi* with Russia but failed. It is even said semi-officially that while the concert of the nations was still unbroken, Japan made propositions to Russia looking to a friendly alliance, but this was rejected. Just what the terms of this proposition were is not known further than is set forth in the Japanese pamphlet issued shortly after the outbreak of hostilities. Presumably it was something more than they asked for therein.

But whatever it was, when it was rejected, the Japanese turned towards Great Britain, who received them with open arms. A treaty of alliance and friendship was signed, by which each power agreed to help the other in any war in which it might find itself engaged with more than one power.

This treaty was signed on January 30, 1902, and became known to the world about March 1st following. That it broke the concert of the powers cannot now be doubted. It changed the situation materially and made it certain that war would follow at no distant day. Indeed it is generally believed by people who do not, in such great matters, yield to their sympathies, that but for this treaty Japan would not have begun war when she did. If this is so it is evident that the blame, if any exists, must rest equally on Great Britain and Japan, and that in the end the consequences will probably be divided between them according to their vulnerability and the power of Russia.

On the declaration of Mr. Hay to Mr. Tower, dated March 1, 1902, it is certain that our government was absolutely ignorant of the negotiation of this treaty of alliance between Japan and Great Britain, and feared it would lead to further complication.

This declaration was followed, March 16, 1902, by a joint notification of Russia and France to the United States, that while the preliminary declarations of the treaty between Japan and Great Britain were regarded as an affirmation of the essential principles which Russia and France had repeatedly declared to be the foundation of their own policy and considered as a guaranty of their special interests in the Far East, it was naturally enough made the occasion of an ominous warning through us to the world, that: "The aggressive action of third powers or renewed disturbances in China," would justify the two "allied governments" in reserving to themselves "the right eventually to devise suitable means to insure their protection."

On the 8th of April, 1902, Russia and China signed the treaty previously mentioned which provided for the complete withdrawal of the Russian forces from Manchuria, in three successive movements, to be completed in eighteen months. On the representation of other nations, mainly the United States, this was shortened into an agreement to complete the withdrawal within one year.

But both of these agreements contained a proviso which the critics of Russia seldom mention. It gave clear and explicit warning that the agreement would be carried out only on the proviso "that no disturbance should arise, and that the action of the other powers should not prevent it."

The policy of Russia seems to have undergone a change about

March 1. This change was fairly foreshadowed, as indicated above, in the joint notice of March 16, 1902, to the United States, but it will be observed that it did not prevent the signing of the agreement with China, however much later developments may have prevented its execution.

No one can read the documents contained in the diplomatic correspondence of the times, without perceiving that Russia was not only reluctant, but slow in withdrawing her forces. It is alleged that she did not intend to do so at all. It is charged that she is generally treacherous and unreliable. It is certain that she has never put forth any detailed explanation of her plans or purposes. On the other hand, it is equally certain that she has never withdrawn her repeated declarations in favor of the "open door" policy, which it should be observed again, does not mean "free trade," but equal trade opportunities for all nations, in all parts of the Chinese Empire.

This is a sound position. It is a sound principle of international comity. It is what our government has always stood for. It is what we stand for now and what we should hereafter stand for, but what influence the conclusion of the war now in progress will have upon it, no one can say. One man's guess is as good as another's.

In order, however, that this sound principle shall be carried into effect, it is important to fix a date which shall mark the epoch or the condition of affairs from which it shall run. It is understood that our government still stands for the administrative and territorial entity of the Chinese Empire, but from what date shall we count? It is understood that we along with the other continental powers stand for the *status quo ante*. But it is important to consider if that is to date from the end of the Japanese-Chinese war, or from the close of the Boxer Rebellion, or from the outbreak of the Japan-Russian War, or must the world accept the situation at the close of the present Japan-Russian War? Manifestly Japan will claim and stand out for the latter. Who can say that she ought not to do so? The continental powers practically united, as I have shown, in insisting that Japan should relinquish her hold on the mainland after she had vanquished China. Will they dare to do so after she has vanquished Russia? And if they do, will Japan yield as she did before, or will she stand for the *uti*

posseditis, and defy the world in behalf of her right to hold what she has conquered? In the first case the allies had the concurrence if not the actual backing of Great Britain. In the second case Japan will doubtless have that backing to the fullest extent.

In the first case the Afrite was coaxed back into its bottle. Is it to be hoped that in the second case, it can either be coaxed or driven back?

I confess I do not know. But the conditions are now different and the presumption is that the settlement must be different.

How the present war is to end, or when it will end, I cannot presume to say. No man knows. There are ominous outgivings in regard to territorial and money indemnities, neither of which is without precedent in the experience of the modern world. Nations in such matters are presumed to do what they can, and I see no reason why the Japanese should not be expected to follow their own precedent. They exacted both a territorial and a money indemnity and besides insisted upon certain commercial advantages from China. Why should they not insist upon similar terms from Russia?

I can see no reason under the circumstances why they should not. They will probably stay on the continent this time, come what may. And this makes a permanent disturbance of the balance of power in Eastern Asia. It brings about a state of "unstable equilibrium." It inaugurates a new epoch in the history of mankind. It becomes an encouragement to every Asiatic people. It means Asia for the Asiatics. It means that the white man is no longer to dominate the yellow man. It means that the period of spoliation has come to an end. It means that Japan is awake. Finally it means that China must also awake, and that the two will awaken all Asiatic mankind.

I have always held that the YELLOW PERIL is a myth which might be ignored, and this was a reasonable view, so long as the yellow races remained separate, and without a leader. But the triumph of the Japanese in 1895 settled that. Their triumph over the Russians confirms and emphasizes it. It makes Japan the hegemon—the ruling people of the Asiatic races—and will surely turn every element of discontent in Asia towards her for instruction and guidance.

In her last, as well as her first Continental War, she was doubtless fighting for what she conceived to be her own permanent

and paramount interests, the conservation of her own possessions and independence, and for an outlet for her overflow population. But in her last war she was also fighting for China—for her territorial and administrative integrity. And except in so far as she must violate that herself, she must be expected to do what she can to make that good, as against Russia at least.

And will this task not impose upon her the task of showing the Chinese how to modernize and reorganize their government, how to develop the untold resources of that empire, how to build railroads, open mines, erect furnaces, rolling-mills and factories; how to levy, collect and disburse taxes; how to organize and administer armies and navies; how to run an honest and efficient government; in short, how to do all the things the Japanese themselves have learned to do so well?

This means an economic revolution for China. It means a new epoch in that empire. It means an end of the old—a commencement of the new.

The military consequences of all this are doubtless remote, but the economic, the commercial, the financial consequences which must necessarily precede the military consequences, are near at hand. The Japanese having shown themselves adepts in all such matters, and that they need no longer stand in awe of any nation in the world, may well insist on taking the leading part in the political and economic development of China. This means that the European who is at best an interloper and a middleman, will be dispensed with in China as he has been dispensed with in Japan. It means that Japan, which has an overflow of population, who live frugally and work for low wages, will furnish all the manufactured articles China cannot produce herself. But above all it means that occupation will be found for the countless millions of frugal, industrious Chinamen in work of which they have no conception at present.

If any person should doubt that this correctly outlines the future of Eastern Asia, let him recall the conversation between Li Hung-Chang and Count Ito, as set forth in the protocol to the Japan-Chinese treaty of Shimoneseki, which closed the Japan-Chinese War. He will there find it set forth in substance that the time has come when the yellow races of Asia should stand together to resist the encroachments of the white races of Europe. If he

still doubts that the Japanese will not take up the task of guiding China in the work of political and economic regeneration, let him read the "Awakening of Japan," by Okakura Kakuzo.

If he still thinks that China is not really awakening or that she is not certain to set up in business for herself and start in earnest upon the march of modern progress, let him read the "Letters of a Chinese Official," or my own book on China, which made its first appearance nearly twenty years ago.

If he imagines that all this may take place without affecting us, let him reflect that although we have despoiled her of no land, and now stand for her territorial integrity, we in common with every other power that had a legation, a missionary or a merchant in China, or could send a soldier to participate in the capture and plunder of her capital, have wrested from her and still hold on to an indemnity far in excess of any damage sustained, or any actual expense incurred by us.

I am not unmindful of the fact that we returned our share of the fund taken from Japan many years ago on account of the Shimoneseki affair, or that it has been proposed to return to China all that we unjustly took from her at the end of the Boxer War. I have no doubt that we should make restitution in the second as we did in the first case, and I believe we will—but our skirts are not yet clear.

And now one word as to the peace between Japan and Russia. Let us hope in the interest of all mankind, and particularly of themselves, that it is near at hand, and that it will be concluded on such terms as will make it permanent. To this end, it should be equally fair and just to the belligerents, as well as to all others concerned. It should respect and guarantee the territorial and administrative entity of Korea as well as of China. While it should at the same time provide a place for the overflow population of Japan without the displacement of any other people, it should permit an outlet from Siberia to an ice-free port on the Pacific. Above all it should provide and secure the equal right of all nations for trade with every part of the Chinese Empire, as it existed before either the Japan-Chinese or the Japan-Russian War.

Permit me to say in conclusion that while I have had for twenty years the greatest confidence in the genuine quality of Japanese civilization and the greatest sympathy with the enterprise and the

aspirations of the Japanese people, I have felt that their true policy was to confine themselves to the islands of the sea, and refrain from adventures and encroachments on the Continental mainland. I feel now, notwithstanding their extraordinary victories, that they have started upon a course the end of which no man can foresee.

While it is premature to discuss the terms, I have no doubt that peace under the conditions which I have indicated is possible. I wish I could say that I think it probable. The actual settlement, whenever it comes, must necessarily depend mainly upon the belligerents themselves, but that the consequences will more or less seriously affect the commercial interests of every civilized nation can hardly be questioned.

Finally, while our interests in the Far East, as I have shown, are mainly commercial, it is conceivable that through our control of the Philippines, and our participation in the indemnity for the Boxer outrages, they may become political. But whether commercial or political, or both, they certainly warrant the conclusion that at no time since our independence has our government ever been under a greater or a more imperative obligation than it is now to maintain that strict and impartial neutrality between the belligerents and the powers immediately concerned, which is the central doctrine of our diplomacy.